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CITIZEN AIRMAN

Volume 73 No. 4

August 2021



Resilience at 20,000 Feet
Airmen rely on inner strength & each other



Official Magazine of the Air Force Reserve



READINESS

“

To fly, fight, and win...

Airpower anytime, anywhere.

- United States Air Force
Mission Statement

”

Heroes of the Air Force Reserve:

On September 11, 2021, we will commemorate the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on our nation. Across the world, people will pause and reflect on where they were when they heard the news, or watched events unfold in real time.

That day was an inflection point in our history, with Reserve Citizen Airmen running toward danger to rescue those trapped at the Pentagon. Their actions were among countless heroic deeds.

None of the Airmen responding on the ground or those taking flight to protect our nation in that moment could foresee how much the events of that day would alter our country, Department of Defense and Air Force Reserve.

On that day and every day since, our fellow Americans have looked to us to continue to stand between them and those who would do them harm.

As an Air Force Reserve, we shifted, sustaining an accelerated operational tempo for two decades. With every challenge, Reserve Citizen Airmen and their families demonstrated exceptional resilience.

Much like 9/11, the COVID-19 pandemic altered our routines and changed the nature of our operations. Carrying on our legacy of standing between a threat and our fellow Americans, so many of you volunteered to support pandemic response operations.

As more people are vaccinated, it continues to become safer to gather



Tech. Sgt. Frank Caciotta

Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee shakes hands with Maj. Ashlea Garcia, the 310th Space Wing executive officer, during a recent visit to Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado.

together once again. Returning to work or school in person can present challenges. Attempting to restore some sense of normalcy, even while the shadow of the pandemic looms over the recent past, can be taxing on resiliency.

Fortunately, we have spent a great deal of time and energy during the last 18 months to make the Air Force Reserve an even better place to work. First, we have hired 10 full-time chaplains at all of our host installations so that they can work alongside our Airmen to build resilient communities on our installations. Second, we have placed 30 full-time first sergeants at host base installations to serve as focal points for getting Airmen the help they need.

Finally, we have also worked to increase the number of full-time healthcare providers. Using the best practices of online collaboration that we learned during the pandemic combined with increasing provider capacity, we have managed to reduce fitness for duty case processing timelines by 32% over the last year. Not only have our providers decreased wait times for Airmen waiting to get back to serving, they have also been able to take on more complex cases.

In one instance, a pilot was able to return to flying after having his colon

removed just nine months after his final surgery. No Air Force pilot had ever returned to service after such an operation. However, thanks to our providers, we were able to keep a talented Airman in a critical career field doing the job he loves.

Similarly, our medical team was able work to restore an Airman with an amputated leg to flying status. He now continues to serve as a loadmaster. Both of these Airmen have broken down barriers for those who come after them.

As we begin to transition from operations responding to the pandemic to operations informed by the pandemic, we will continue pushing to make this next fiscal year better than the previous one.

The Command Chief and I are proud to serve with each of you. ■

RICHARD W. SCOBEE
Lieutenant General, USAF
Chief of Air Force Reserve
Commander, Air Force Reserve Command

BACK TO NORAML-ISH

The past 18 months have been taxing on each of us in unique ways. The pandemic and the frequent isolation associated with safety measures gave many of us time to reflect. With travel restricted and gatherings limited, I personally began to reassess my priorities and the choices I made along my own journey. As we start to resume some semblance of normalcy in our everyday lives, I want to capture some of those thoughts.

This month, I will celebrate my 32nd year in the United States Air Force. I am grateful for all of the opportunities that serving my nation has afforded me. I am particularly thankful for my incredible wife, Edith. I would not have been able to navigate every challenge the pandemic threw at us as a family without her grace and patience. For the majority of my career, she has stood beside me and made countless sacrifices to support my career. The pandemic brought that into an even sharper focus for me.

Isolation with my family made me question my own priorities. As a command, we have three strategic priorities: prioritize strategic depth and accelerate readiness, develop resilient leaders, and reform the organization. Those strategic priorities guide where we should be putting our effort. As Reserve Citizen Airmen, the majority of us also have three priorities: our families, our military careers and our civilian careers. Work-work-life balance means that we are putting the right amount of effort into each priority.

I have not always juggled personal priorities perfectly. I would venture to guess that is the case with many of us. Our core value of Service Before Self can be demanding. However, it should not be a reason for completely neglecting other parts of our life. I will retire from the military next year with one less priority to juggle, as I resume my civilian career. At the conclusion of that journey, family will be the everlasting priority I will be holding onto. As we begin to recalibrate our lives and return to normal-ish, I encourage each of you to examine your priorities so you don't drop the ball and regret missing out.

As we all thought about a future in which we could safely resume traveling and gathering, many of us considered what was not ideal about our work environment. Were all of our processes driving effort toward getting after our strategic priorities? Probably not. Were we thinking through how to make a more resilient organization based on lessons learned from the pandemic? I hope so. As we start to scale in person participation, I encourage all of our leaders to do one simple thing: attack processes, engage Airmen.



Tech. Sgt. Tina R. Abrahams

Chief Master Sgt. Timothy White speaks with Airmen at Beale Air Force Base, California, during a recent visit.

The last year and a half of adversity has taught each of us different lessons about how to build resilience, lead teams and accomplish the mission. We have the opportunity to capture over 74,300 diverse points of view from each member of our team on how to reform the organization to ensure that we are ready for the next challenge.

As always, it is an honor and privilege serving as your command chief. The boss and I are grateful for everything that you do. ■

TIMOTHY C. WHITE JR.
Chief Master Sergeant, USAF
Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief of Air Force Reserve
Command Chief Master Sergeant, Air Force Reserve Command

From the Command Spouses

FAMILY RESILIENCE: A NATIONAL SECURITY IMPERATIVE

The Air Force Reserve relies on resilient families to enable Airmen to support its vital missions. Family resilience is tapped monthly as Reserve Citizen Airmen attend drill weekends, often requiring family members and friends to assume responsibilities back home. Additionally, many Airmen travel outside of their local area to perform unit training assemblies, compounding logistical issues.

This tyranny of distance can also leave family members feeling disconnected from the unit. These monthly stress tests can be a dress rehearsal for longer deployments and periods of family separation. As a team, we understand how even predictable routine family separations can tax resilience, which is why we advocate for programs that help take care of our families.

The Key Spouse Program serves as a first line of defense for family resilience. It is an official Air Force unit family readiness program designed to enhance mission readiness and resiliency while establishing a sense of community. Unlike our active-duty counterparts, Reserve Citizen Airmen may not live near a base. This can create a barrier to families attempting to access base services. For example, at Grissom Air Reserve Base in Indiana, the 434th Air Refueling Wing's Key Spouse Program provides support to spouses across 35 states with a dedicated team of 26 volunteers.

To overcome geographic constraints, some wings have implemented virtual events for Key Spouses to share information through Facebook Live or other platforms. These events have been essential to continuing the Key Spouse program during the pandemic, allowing our Key Spouse teams to disseminate information throughout their units during a particularly stressful time. As it continues to become safer to gather in person, some Key Spouses may consider implementing office hours during unit training assemblies. The 310th Space Wing at Schriever Air Force Base in Colorado pioneered this practice, enabling collaboration with Key Spouses and commanders across the wing to strengthen the program.

Cooperation between commanders and Key Spouses can help to better tailor programs to serve Reserve Citizen Airmen and their families. For example, a few years ago Air Force Reserve Command hosted its Wing Commander and Command Chief Conference at March Air Reserve Base in California. At the conference, the spouses in attendance learned about the 452nd Air Mobility Wing's collaboration with the Al-Rahama Food



Janis Scobee and Edith White take part in a recent virtual Key Spouse Mentors conference. (Courtesy photo)

Bank. During both unit training assemblies and the work week, the Airman and Family Readiness Center coordinated with this community partner to provide food to those struggling with food insecurity.

Partnerships with local communities can help build programs that meet the unique needs of Reserve Citizen Airmen and their families. For example, finding childcare during unit training assemblies can strain Reserve Citizen Airmen who are either single parents or dual military couples, especially if they commute long distances.

The Home Community Care program, which provides free childcare during drill periods when there is no other adult in a household available to provide care is specially tailored to their needs. This program partners with childcare providers by zip code to identify local providers available during drill weekends when many base child development centers are closed. Each base has a Home Community Care coordinator, who can help Airmen register for the program and find a childcare provider to meet their needs.

Recovering from the pandemic will not be as easy as flipping a switch. Each family will face different challenges. Job loss, rebalancing childcare with remote work, food insecurity and returning to in-person work are just some of the potential stressors that can impact Reserve Citizen Airmen.

These important issues tax resilience, undermine family readiness and potentially detract from the overall mission. We are especially grateful to commanders and Key Spouses who enhance readiness by helping families utilize the various programs offered to meet their unique needs.

Janis Scobee *Edith White*

JANIS SCOBEE and EDITH WHITE
Command Spouses, Air Force Reserve Command




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Chief of Air Force Reserve's Strategic Priorities

-  Priority 1: Prioritize strategic depth and accelerate readiness
#ReserveReady
-  Priority 2: Develop resilient leaders
#ReserveResilient
-  Priority 3: Reform the organization
#ReserveReform
- Look for these icons for stories that focus on these three priorities.

CITIZEN AIRMAN



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On the Cover: Two Reserve Citizen Airmen were part of a five-person team of mountaineers who attempted to climb the highest peak in North America recently to emphasize the importance of proactive resilience. Their story starts on page 24. (Lt. Col. Rob Marshall)

 A publication by the U.S. Air Force Reserve 

"It's like Uber for the work force"



IMA leading innovative talent management initiative

By Bo Joyner



Reserve Citizen Airmen across the country have taken Air Force Reserve Command Commander Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee's directive to reform the organization to heart; perhaps none more so than Col. Michael McGinley.

An individual mobilization augmentee currently serving as the Innovation Advisor to the Military Deputy, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition at the Pentagon, McGinley has spent the last four years focusing on how to bring agile talent employment to the Department of Defense.

"My overarching vision is to revolutionize talent management not just within the DoD, but in the entire federal government," McGinley said during a recent interview. "Our leaders have told us they want us to be bold and take risks, so that's what we're doing."

While serving on active duty as the director of the Defense Innovation Unit's Boston office in 2017, the colonel started to envision a real-time talent marketplace platform that would link mission stakeholders with the right talent at the right time, regardless of location.

"My 'Aha' moment actually came in 2018, when I left my office and used my phone to grab an Uber to get to a crosstown meeting," he said. "Sitting in the Uber, it hit me like a ton of bricks – if the commercial technology exists to match rider demand with supply, why can't we do the same with talent management in the DoD."

McGinley's vision for an Uber-like talent management app has grown to become Gig Eagle – a Total Force initiative designed to connect commanders and program managers with short-term needs with people with the right skill set, availability and desire to work on a project.

"Although the DoD is getting more adaptable, talent access still follows a traditional three-year PCS (permanent change of station) tour or extended MPA (Military Personnel Appropriation) mindset," McGinley said. "There's little, if any, ability to scan the entire DoD and identify the best short-term talent for a mission."

Using precision talent-sourcing algorithms, Gig Eagle will allow program managers to identify the right person for a specific, short-term task based on skill set. Also, it will allow DoD members to instantly receive and sign up for missions, regardless of location or relationship to the sponsoring unit. Gig Eagle participants will work on tasks in four-hour blocks of time, from any location.

McGinley provided this example of how Gig Eagle works: A manager working on an artificial intelligence project needs to understand the latest in neural network optimization. No one in his office has this expertise. Using Gig Eagle, he submits a request for a neural network expert with an advanced computer science degree to work for 12 hours to provide one white paper and a one-hour brief. The deliverables are due in five days. Gig Eagle searches its data base of 2.87 million DoD personnel and finds 500 artificial intelligence experts. Of these, 50 have the capacity and availability to handle the assignment. Five of these are interested and volunteer. The manager chooses one of the five, and that person is approved for 12 hours of work.

The colonel said Gig Eagle is being developed in three phases. The first iteration will focus on unlocking the talent of the Reserve Component.

"It just makes sense to target our Reserve and Guard forces first since they possess expertise in countless areas in their civilian jobs and they have a great desire to serve," he said. "It

helps that the DIU Gig Eagle team is stocked with rock star innovators like Col. CJ Johnson, Col. Chris Jordan, Lt. Col. Chuck Kubik, Maj. Jonathan Hudgins, Maj. Ray Sandifer and Maj. Eric Snelgrove. Their collective accomplishments in the public and private sectors are incredible – just take a look at their LinkedIn profiles. The fact that these leaders are Reservists is important. Their understanding of Reserve Component user needs is second-to-none."

The second iteration will expand the Gig Eagle talent pool to select active-duty members, civilians, members of the Individual Ready Reserve and other DoD personnel. The third iteration will further expand the talent pool beyond existing DoD employees, opening up access to the world's best non-DoD talent.

"It is also worth noting that DIU is staffing its Gig Eagle prototype effort with significant private-sector experience," McGinley said. "I felt like I was in an MBA classroom learning from seasoned executives like Jeff Klugman, Matt Swindle, John Duselis, Heather Ichord, Sarah Pearson and Rob Mishev. Honestly, it's a real privilege to be able to work with these people."

Gig Eagle is a true joint initiative. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition recently transferred ownership of the Gig Eagle program to the U.S. Space Force to begin the prototyping effort. The Defense Innovation Unit is leading the prototype development, spearheaded by Scott Sumner. The Space and Missile System Center's Talent Management Office, led by Aine Nakai, will run day-to-day Gig Eagle employment. The initial user cohort will consist

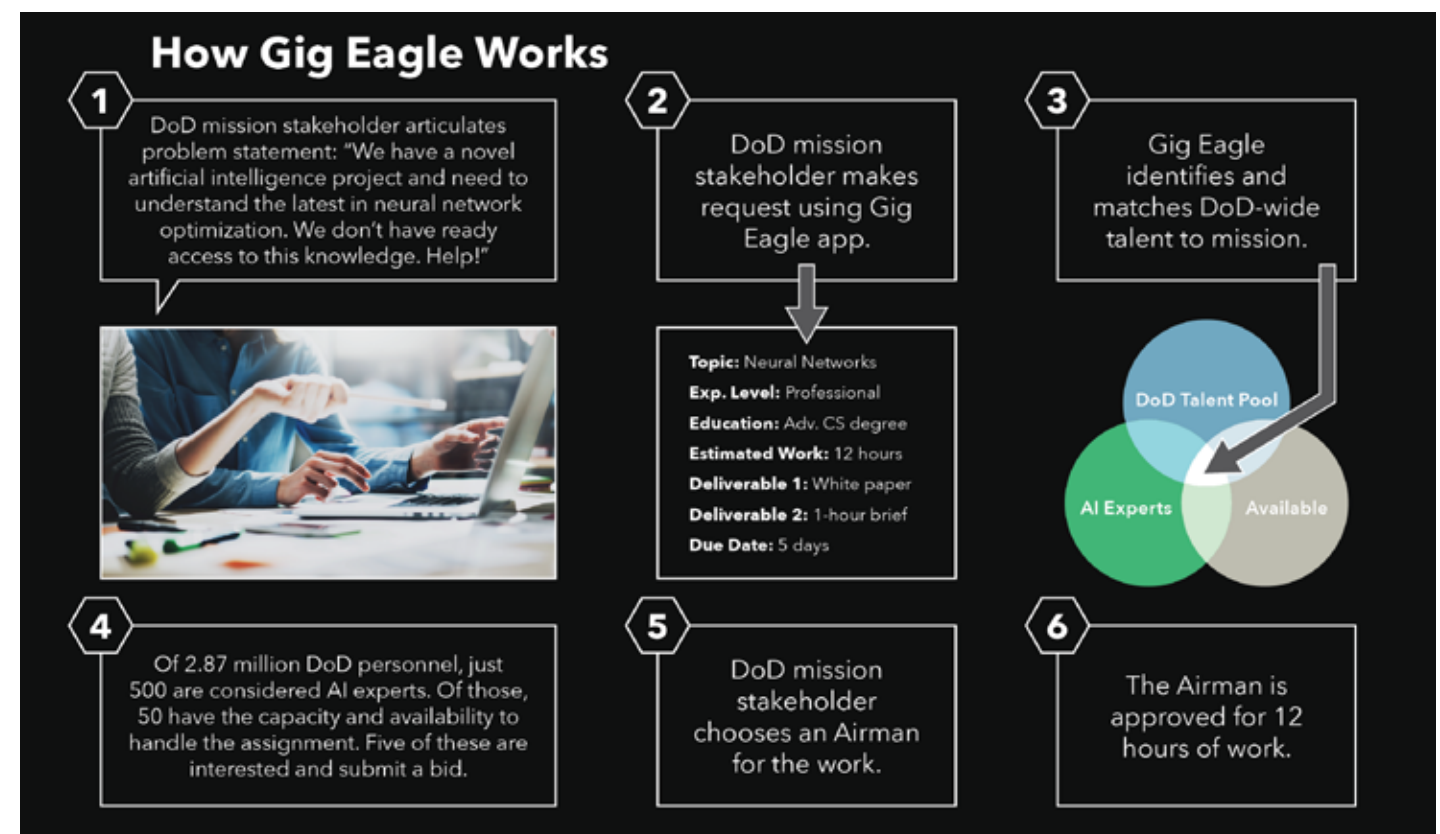
of members of the Reserve Components from the Air Force, Marine Corps and Army. AFWERX and SpaceWerx are also supporting the program.

Brig. Gen. Shawn Campbell, the Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer for the Space Force's Chief of Space Operations at the Pentagon, believes Gig Eagle is a great fit for not just the Space Force but for all of the Department of Defense.

"Gig Eagle falls directly into one of the concepts by which we are building the Space Force because we are trying to become the first truly digital service," Campbell said. "We see Gig Eagle as a great way to connect people who have certain competencies or capabilities to unique problems or challenges. The Space Force is proud to run the beta test for Gig Eagle this summer and we're confident it will be a valuable tool for us and all of the DoD."

McGinley said agile talent employment and the Gig Eagle app are critical for DoD's success in today's rapidly changing environment.

"Our senior leaders have repeatedly said that the creativity and talents of our people is our greatest strength," he said. "We need to have a flexible and agile system to unlock all the special skills and potential our people possess." #ReserveReady #ReserveReform



Cold Chain Guru

Reservist critical to DLA's COVID vaccine logistics efforts



Lt. Col. Dana Dallas, second from left, along with fellow Reservists from the 914th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, New York. Dallas has been a Reserve Citizen Airman for 21 years. (Courtesy photo)

By Bo Joyner

For 21 years, Dana Dallas successfully juggled her flourishing civil service career at the Defense Logistics Agency with military service in the Air Force Reserve. Then came COVID-19.

As the nation's combat logistics support agency, DLA manages the global supply chain – from raw materials to end user to disposition – for all the military services, other federal agencies, and partner and allied nations. As DLA's cold chain program manager assigned to DLA Troop Support in Philadelphia, Dallas is the lead for the logistics involved with any medical item that has a temperature requirement.

"Cold chain management is the science of preparing medial temperature-sensitive products for shipment utilizing approved systems and procedures," Dallas explained. "It also includes ensuring required temperatures are maintained throughout the supply chain and validation that those conditions are being met during all phases of distribution until issue or administration."

Needless to say, the COVID-19 pandemic added considerably to Dallas's already heavy DLA workload, and ultimately led her to make the difficult decision to retire from the Air Force Reserve. A lieutenant colonel, Dallas is currently assigned to the 914th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, New York.

She will retire in August with 21 years of service in the Reserve, five years of active-duty time and four years at the Air Force Academy.

"Being fourth generation military, I'm proud to have worn the Air Force uniform for the last 30 years," she said. "It hasn't always been easy, but I've always been able to balance both jobs in the past. Unfortunately, that balance has become more difficult now with everything going on with the COVID vaccine at DLA."

DLA is tasked with distributing the COVID-19 vaccine to all overseas military and Navy Fleet customers. Since some of the vaccines are required to be kept frozen at minus 20 degrees Celsius,

the cold chain management can be difficult to say the least.

"Add in the fact that the vaccines are currently under an emergency use authorization and are not fully Food and Drug Administration approved, and it presents some unique customs challenges in shipping to some overseas locations," Dallas said. "There is no real end to the mission yet, and I'm not sure how long the high pace will continue."

Like almost all Reserve Citizen Airmen, Dallas became proficient in balancing her part-time military duty with her full-time job as she moved up the ladder at DLA and simultaneously managed a Reserve career that saw her serve as a DLA individual mobilization augmentee and in aeromedical evacuation squadrons at the 514th Air Mobility Wing, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, and then the 914th Air Refueling Wing at Niagara Falls.

"I can't say enough about my leadership at both DLA and in the Reserve," the lieutenant colonel said.



As the Defense Logistics Agency's cold chain program manager, Dallas is responsible for all the logistics involved with any medical item that has a temperature requirement. (DLA photo)

"They went out of their way to make sure I could meet my responsibilities in both of my jobs. There has been a lot of approval of telecommuting and a lot of working at the Reserve unit during the day and then coming back to my room and working on DLA stuff until midnight. I just finally reached a point where I didn't feel like I could give my Reserve job all the attention it needed."

Dallas said her Reserve career was highlighted by three deployments, and that her two jobs have intersected at times over the years.

"Where my jobs bleed over has been entertaining at times," she said. "My last deployment to Qatar, I actually put on a suit one day and went to the Army base and visited with an Army theater logistics operation that DLA partners with because I happened to be in the neighborhood. Once I was launching an air evac mission and had to tell the loadmaster he was putting the cold chain boxes in the wrong part of the aircraft. When he asked me what made me qualified to tell him that, I pointed to the label on the box with my name on it. The rest of my crew were just nodding their heads. Yep, that's her."

She went on to say that her service in the Reserve helped her in her role at DLA.

"When we would ship cold chain to Reserve units, in most cases it would go through the active-duty host unit and would then have to be trans shipped to the Reserve unit," she said. "There could be delays in time and some times

the repackaging used would present problems.

"A few years ago we used Niagara as a test base for direct shipments of flu vaccine. It worked really well, and that's the standard we now use for all Air Force Reserve bases. I've tried to take advantage of that crossover wherever I can."

Dallas said the decision to hang up her Air Force uniform has been heart wrenching, but it's made easier by the fact that there are so many talented Reservists assigned to the 914th AES eager to rise to the challenge.

"Ever since I've been a second lieutenant, I've known that the most important part of my job is to grow,

develop, mentor and build our future leadership," she said. "I'm confident in the people I have helped grow up in our unit. They are going to do a phenomenal job. At this point in time, managing this pandemic and making sure we are ready if there's another one needs my full attention at DLA."

With her retirement approaching, Dallas said she was experiencing a wide range of emotions. "I'm a little nervous, I'm a little sad and I'm very proud of what I've done in the Reserve. There isn't much I would do differently. COVID has affected everyone in the last year. It definitely had an effect on me. It's all about the vaccine for me and it will be that way for a while. I'm going to miss wearing the uniform and I'm going to miss the mission, but most of all I am going to miss the wonderful people I've worked with over the years. There's a large chunk of my squadron that is deployed and won't be able to be at my retirement, but Niagara is having an Air Force ball in December. I'm making sure my mess dress is still in order so I can come back and see everybody." #ReserveResilient ■

Dallas visits with team members from Operation Warp Speed on the day the first COVID-19 vaccination doses rolled out. (Courtesy photo)





Lt. Col. Cyrus Champagne and his wife, Lt. Col. Kimberly Champagne, shown with their daughter, Sarah, both served as Air Force Reserve squadron commanders while juggling busy civilian jobs and ensuring time for their family. (Courtesy photo)

Balancing Act

Husband and wife squadron commanders find harmony in busy lives

By Bo Joyner

Reserve Citizen Airmen are constantly striving to find balance in life between civilian job, Reserve duty and family. A husband and wife team of Air Force Reserve squadron commanders has found that balance despite their busy schedules and the lofty demands of leadership.

For two years, Lt. Col. Cyrus Champagne and Lt. Col. Kimberly Champagne simultaneously served as commanders of Air Force Reserve squadrons. He led the 710th Network Operations Squadron at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, until passing command on to Lt. Col. Zachary Zichang in June. She is still the commander of the 315th Force Support Squadron at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina.

Kimberly said when she was offered command of the 315th FSS in 2019, she was initially hesitant. “Cyrus was already a commander and it was a big demand on our time as a family,” she said. “We have a daughter who was 13 at the time and I was the Key Spouse for Cyrus’s squadron, so I definitely had to think long and hard about taking on the additional responsibility of my own squadron.”

After a lot of soul searching, discussion with her family and advice from her mentors, Kimberly decided to accept the offer

to lead the 103 people assigned to the force support squadron at Charleston.

As an Air Reserve Technician, leading the 315th FSS is both Kimberly’s full-time job and her Reserve assignment. Cyrus is a traditional Reservist who works for the Naval Information Warfare Center in Charleston as a civilian. For the two years he commanded the 710th NOS, Cyrus would make frequent trips to Robins to accomplish his Reserve job while traveling extensively in his civilian capacity.

“Cyrus would always say that even though he was a traditional Reservist, you’re never not a commander,” Kimberly said. “And that’s definitely the truth. As a force support squadron commander, we never close. Being a two-commander family was never easy, but we were up for the challenge.”

So, how do the Champanges balance full-time jobs with Reserve duty and raising a family?

“For us, it all begins with our faith,” Cyrus said. “We start every day off with prayer and look for divine direction on how to balance things. That gets our day off to a good start. We rank and prioritize what needs to be done that day, realizing that we have to make sure we are taking care of each other.”

He went on to say that being a dual-commander family added a level of understanding that made their balancing act a little easier.

“Both of us being commanders, we had an understanding of what the other person was going through, so we didn’t have a lot of the friction you sometimes find when one person doesn’t understand what the other is doing,” he said.

Kimberly said communication is one of the keys to striking a healthy work-life balance. “We make a point to talk about what all we have going on in our lives. That way, we can tap into time management and determine what things can wait and what things can’t,” she said.

Julie Russell, Air Force Reserve Command’s Director of Psychological Health program manager, echoed Kimberly’s sentiments about the importance of communication. “In order to effectively juggle everything you have going on in your life, you have to know exactly how many items you have to keep in the air,” she said. “And, even then, you need to be ready when somebody throws another item at you unexpectedly.”

Along those same lines, Russell said it’s important to carve out time for the important things in your life, including work, family and in the case of Reservists, military duty. “For a lot of people, strictly working nine to five or eight to four is a thing of the past,” she said. “And certainly commanders can expect to work long hours and get calls at all times of the day or night, but it’s critical that we set aside time for our families and the things

Cyrus, shown here with Senior Master Sgt. William Opoku, served as the commander of the 710th Network Operations Squadron at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, for two years. (Courtesy photo)



Kimberly, shown here with daughter, Sarah, is currently the commander of the 315th Force Support Squadron at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina. (Courtesy photo)

that make life worthwhile. It’s also important to build in some extra time for those unexpected things you know are going to come along.”

Cyrus said the COVID-19 pandemic added difficulty to the Champagne family’s balancing act. “The pandemic definitely threw us a curve ball, like it did for everyone else,” he said. “There were times when I was on two Teams calls at the same time – one for the Reserve and one for the Navy. I found that working from home, it was easy to just keep working and that made it harder to set aside that family time. It’s so easy to get caught up in what you’re doing at work, especially when you’re teleworking, and you have to be able to shut it off and give that time to your family.”

Kimberly said another important part of achieving a healthy work-life balance is learning how to say no and knowing when to ask for help. “This is something a lot of people, including me, struggle with, but you have to know your limits. There were times when Cyrus and I would be TDY at the same time and our daughter would have to stay with a family member. It always seemed like the perfect person showed up just when we needed them. We couldn’t have done it without help – both at home and at work. I have a smart operations officer who’s a traditional Reservist, wise chief who helps me lead and a strong first sergeant. Together, we lead the squadron. I don’t do it by myself.”

Finally, the Champanges said their daughter played an important role in their ability to juggle busy civilian jobs and Reserve duties. “Sarah definitely sacrificed for us to have our careers,” Kimberly said. “She’s spent a lot of long nights at the office with me, and she’s been there when we bring things home. It’s a family affair and she’s never missed a beat. Her resiliency is greatly appreciated and saluted.” #ReserveResilient ■

Ironman

Triathlete encourages others to up their fitness game



Brig. Gen. David W. Smith will be competing in the Ironman Triathlon World Championships in October. He encourages all Reserve Citizen Airmen to make physical fitness a priority. (Courtesy photos)



As Brig. Gen. David W. Smith ramps up his training for the Ironman Triathlon World Championships in Kona, Hawaii, in October, he is encouraging all Reserve Citizen Airmen to make fitness a priority in their lives.

Smith is the mobilization assistant to the commander of 9th Air Force (Air Forces Central) – the air component of United States Central Command responsible for air operations in USCENTCOM's 20-nation area of responsibility in Southwest Asia.

At October's world championships, he will be attempting to complete a 2.4-mile ocean swim, a 112-mile bicycle ride and a 26.2-mile run alongside some of the fittest people on the planet.

Qualifying for the Kona triathlon is extremely difficult, and it's taken Smith several years to earn a spot. He said he is relishing the challenge and is confident his training will have him prepared for the ultimate test of mind, body and spirit.

"It took me roughly 10 years to reach my goal to qualify for the Ironman World Championships, but I never gave up," Smith said. "I had a personal goal of competing in one Ironman event per year and that forced me to remain committed to a regular fitness regimen. I would encourage all Airmen and Guardians to do the same – set a goal. It will keep you consistent and, more importantly, it will keep you committed to reaching that goal. We all know that life sometimes gets in the way, but if you have a goal, it forces you to manage your time effectively to balance your Air Force life with your personal life."

The general said a regular fitness routine helps promote both resilience and comprehensive Airman fitness.

"Whether it's Ironman training or any disciplined and regularly scheduled athletic fitness program, fitness contributes

to not only our physical health, but also our mental and emotional health," he said. "I equate my Ironman training sessions to meditation. It's 'me time' where I'm completely isolated from outside influence and distractions – no TV, no personal device, no e-mail, no cell phone. It's a focused period of fitness and mental isolation for my own health and well-being. A period of mindfulness during our day is healthy for all of us – physically, mentally and emotionally."

Smith said taking part in a regularly scheduled fitness routine can help Reserve Citizen Airmen excel in their job and in their military service.

"There is no question in my mind a regular fitness routine has made me a better Airman, a better officer and a better leader," he said. "One of the questions I often get is, 'how do you find the time to train for an Ironman?' My answer is it's all about time management and setting a daily, weekly and monthly goal that forces you to prioritize your time to achieve a desired effect. What you learn is it's all about time management and goal setting. Guess what, those same values translate into being a better Airman and a better Guardian."

The general said it's important to incorporate proper stretching, nutrition and hydration into a regular training routine, but he said the most important thing is to get started.

"We have the greatest Air Force in the world, not because of our capabilities, but because of our Airmen and Guardians," he said. "Set a goal, make a health fitness program a part of your lifestyle. It will make you a better leader, but most importantly, it will make you a better person – physically, mentally and emotionally." #ReserveReady #ReserveResilient ■

Digital Age Resiliency

AFRC launches new tool on Air Force Connect



By Jessica Dupree

Reserve Citizen Airmen are now able to access Developing Resilient Leader, or DRL, content on demand on any device from one easy-to-access location on the Air Force Connect app.

The DRL Digital Age Learning Content Wall of the Air Force Reserve Command's AF Connect page was designed to be an easy-to-access and user-friendly hub for DRL-related information, documents and links. The content will provide resiliency material for AFRC's 74,000 Airmen, with new content added on a scheduled basis for commanders to use and present as needed.

DRL was the main focus of AFRC's Executive Steering Group this past March and is one of Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee's main priorities.

"When I was asked to come on board and help the Digital Age Learning team bring their DRL vision to AF Connect, I knew I was the person for the job," said Jamal Sutter, 413th Flight Test Group public affairs specialist. "The AF Connect platform is a great tool to present

information to our Airmen. I just wanted to make sure I could take full advantage of AF Connect's capabilities and create a DRL space that was visually pleasing, easy to navigate and, of course, useful."

The DRL Digital Age Learning Content wall has content broken down into four categories: Digital Force Protection, Unclassified Intelligence, Lead Yourself First and Leadership Development. This will provide Airmen with the resources to develop all facets of leadership and resiliency, both professionally and personally.

This new content delivery system is the result of AFRC's Digital Age Learning team led by Brig. Gen. Tanya R. Kubinec, Mobilization Assistant to the Commander, with a cross functional team from the Manpower, Personnel and Services directorate (A1) and about 50 experts from across the command to help her carry out the strategy for growing resilient Reserve leaders at all levels.

"We've centered our strategy around two main goals – Educate and Engage," Kubinec said during a recent interview.

"Our focus is on promoting both professional and personal resilience for all of our Airmen and their families, with a special emphasis on resiliency in the digital age."

The new app is just one step to build resilience in the digital age. Various digital learning resources and content geared for Reserve Citizen Airmen is hosted on the new DRL feature in the AF Connect App.

"Though I had my hand in creating the end product, all the hard work was done by the Digital Age Learning team," Sutter said. "They are the ones who spent months implementing the program's structure and compiling all of the information and material."

To install the Air Force Connect app, simply visit your device's app store and search for "Air Force Connect", then follow these easy steps to add AFRC to your favorites:

Open the favorites tab in the lower right-hand corner.

Search for "Air Force Reserve Command."

Click the add button.

Exit out of the favorites tab and swipe left from the USAF Connect home screen to navigate to the AFRC homepage.

Then click on the DRL button to explore the new digital age learning features.

To stay up to date on the most current information and events in the command, click the notifications tab on the AFRC homepage, and enable push notifications in your device's app settings.

AF Connect users can "favorite" up to 10 organizations, and utilize other functions such as the built-in physical fitness test calculator, phone directories, and access to Common Access Card-enabled sites like the Advanced Distance Learning System and the Defense Travel System using a mobile CAC reader.

#ReserveResilient

(Dupree is assigned to the HQ AFRC public affairs office.) ■



Reserve Citizen Airmen can now access digital age resiliency content on demand on any device from one easy-to-access location on the Air Force Connect app. (Graphic by Jon Quinlan)

Saluting a Hero

Air Force's last serving POW retires,
shares resiliency journey

Story by Airman 1st Class Brianna Beavers

Photos by Andrea Jenkins



“I thought to myself 'this is it - I'm a dead man.'”

Retired Lt. Col. Rob Sweet poses for a photo after his retirement ceremony at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia. During Operation Desert Storm, Sweet's aircraft was shot down and he was held as a prisoner of war for 19 days.



Sweet climbs out of an A-10C Thunderbolt II after his final flight June 5.

As Lt. Col. Rob Sweet, the last serving Air Force prisoner of war, approached retirement on June 6, he recalled the moment during Operation Desert Storm when his A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft was shot down by enemy forces southwest of Basra, Iraq.

On his 30th mission in Desert Storm, Sweet and his flight lead, Capt. Stephen R. Phillis, flew a mission to eliminate enemy targets in the area. When they arrived, they were met with heavy fire.

“Our orders at that point were to leave,” said Sweet, who retired as the deputy commander of the Air Force Reserve’s 476th Fighter Group at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia. “If the target area is too hot, you have to leave. Don’t get shot down. We’ll come back at night or the next day, it’s not time to be a hero.”

Following the orders, Sweet and Phillis navigated away until they saw something they couldn’t ignore.

“We left and found a pristine array of tanks that had not been hit, which shocked us because by that point everything had been bombed for the past 30 days,” Sweet said. “We started attacking those (tanks) ... I got launched on by a (tank), so we started attacking the site where it came from, and I got hit from behind.”

With severe damage to the aircraft, Sweet lost control of his steering.

“I tried a couple of things, and basically it wasn’t going to work so I punched out,” said Sweet.

After ejecting from the aircraft, Sweet said he was unaware of the traumatic events he was about to face upon landing next to about 15 angry Iraqi soldiers.

He was then captured and spent 19 days as an Iraqi prisoner of war. During that time, he experienced beatings and starvation, fought off diseases, and dealt with emotional and mental torment.

Sweet gives most of the credit to his military training for survival.

“The SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape) school that we have is outstanding,” Sweet said. “There were

very few surprises in the jailhouse - I knew what to expect.”

Thanks to a prisoner exchange effort, Sweet and many others returned back to America. Unfortunately, everyone didn’t make it back. Phillis, who at the time was the flight commander with the 353rd Tactical Fighter Squadron, was killed in action.

“Shortly thereafter, I found out my flight lead was killed,” Sweet said. “I was not without psychological problems. I had survivor’s guilt, and it took me a long time to get over that.”

From those tough experiences, Sweet said he learned how to live again through the importance of taking life as it comes.

With 20 years on active duty and currently retiring as a Reservist, Sweet has had a long career. The most fulfilling part was his experience as a squadron commander. Throughout that time, Sweet mentored countless Airmen, especially young fighter pilots, teaching them what it means to be a leader and how to make good decisions under pressure.

“Rob, I want to take this opportunity to recognize your service to our nation and congratulate you on your retirement,” said Gen. CQ Brown, Jr., the chief of staff of the Air Force. “You’ve had an outstanding career that I know you, your family, friends and fellow Airmen are proud of. With your retirement it will be the first time in the history of our Air Force that we will not have a former POW serving. In closing, thank you for all you’ve done.”

As he concludes his journey in the armed forces, his advice to anyone in the military is to take every experience day by day.

“Bloom where you’re planted,” Sweet said. “You’re going to have assignments you don’t like, but make the most of them and move on.” #ReserveResilient

(Beavers is assigned to the 23d Wing Public Affairs office.)

Sweet poses with his family after retiring from the Air Force after more than 30 years of service.





Integrated Defense

Security Forces Reservists accelerate



Staff Sgt. Noah Tancer



Staff Sgt. Noah Tancer



Eric White

Leadership Course

readiness during intensive training

Sixty eight Reserve Citizen Airmen converged on Camp James A. Garfield and Youngstown Air Reserve Station, Ohio, in late May to take part in Air Force Reserve Command's initial Integrated Defense Leadership Course.

The two-week-long IDLC is designed to provide Reserve defenders with intensely focused hands-on training to achieve and maintain combat readiness. The course fits squarely within AFRC's strategic priority of prioritizing strategic depth and accelerating readiness, and was planned and executed completely by AFRC personnel with enthusiastic support from the command's leadership.

"Just in the past 12 days, we've gone over lead tactical squad movements, close quarter battle and integrated defense – items we can't cover over a drill weekend," said Tech. Sgt. Nathan Ellcessor, a traditional Reservist assigned to the 445th Security Forces Squadron, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. Ellcessor, like the other instructors, was selected as a part of the cadre of instructors based upon his skill set and helped craft the course for six weeks prior to the students' arrival.

"By Air Force Instruction, we are supposed to train 218 hours annually on our core skill set," said Master Sgt. Jason Knepper, AFRC's security forces training manager. "There aren't enough hours in the Reserve days to accomplish that. On top of that, there aren't the proper resources, locations and subject matter experts available at each Reserve location. Our units don't really have the ability to meet all of our training requirements, so a centralized training course like this is crucial to maintain our warfighter readiness."

During the course, students were provided practical application of 51 training items from their Air Force Specialty Code Career Field Education and Training Plans over 190 hours of field instruction.

While training the students on traditional defender skills, the cadre also trained traditional Reservists from the 720th Security Forces Squadron, Davis Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, in performing as a professional opposition force. These students were trained to design scenarios, role play as hostile and non-hostile personnel, and provide feedback to students based upon performance. Their performance as an opposition force provided a crucial training benefit to the traditional defender students.

Knepper said the course was a real eye-opener for some of the young defenders in attendance.

"For some of our younger troops, this is their first TDY," he said. "In their eyes, security forces sit in towers and check ID cards. They don't understand the ground combat application that's a critical part of our career field."

"This experience has been very beneficial to me," said Airman First Class Ariel Thierry, a fire team member assigned to the 403rd Security Forces Squadron, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi. "You want to know exactly what your job is, and this program did that for me. I've gained a lot of knowledge from some brilliant instructors out here. Now I want to take that knowledge back home and teach a lot of my fellow Airmen the information I learned here."

Check out the video on the IDLC at <https://www.afrc.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2638425/beta-integrated-defense-leadership-course-video/>. #ReserveReady #ReserveReform

Clockwise from top left, The Air Force Reserve Command's beta Integrated Defense Learning Course class poses for a photo, Staff Sgt. Jacob Williams, a fire team member assigned to the 908th Security Forces Squadron, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, watches his quick response team's back as they cross a creek back to the defensive line. Master Sgt. Jason Knepper, Air Force Reserve Command Security Forces training manager, debriefs a group of Security Forces Airmen. Fire team members assigned to the 910th, 908th and 403rd Security Forces Squadrons denote troop placement and their respective area of responsibility on a sector sketch.



Staff Sgt. Noah Tancer



Staff Sgt. Christopher Soto, 815th Airlift Squadron loadmaster, gives the ready signal after opening the door and placing the jump platform for the Joint Readiness Training Center, Operation Group Airborne parachutists for their static line jump during Voyager Shield. (Jessica L. Kendziorek)

A Win-Win Situation

Flying Jennies sharpen skills while providing airlift support for exercise

By Jessica L. Kendziorek

Reserve Citizen Airmen assigned to the 403rd Wing's 815th Airlift Squadron, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, sharpened their own skills while providing airlift and airdrop support for the active-duty Air Force's 621st Air Mobility Advisory Group during Exercise Voyager Shield at the U.S. Army Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, Louisiana, in May.

The 621st AMAG is part of the 621st Contingency Response Wing, a rapid response expeditionary wing based out of

Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

"Our role during Voyager Shield was to provide the majority of the airlift support to meet the training needs of the 621st AMAG, which actually helped us meet some of the training objectives we can't get during our normal daily training missions," said Lt. Col. Timothy Weiher, 815th AS assistant director of operations.

Among those training objectives was practicing communicating with landing zone and drop zone controllers via secure

communications. The controllers are Air Mobility Liaison Officers – Air Force-rated pilots and navigators integrated with Army and Marine units who act as liaisons between ground forces and air forces. The AMLOs translate the Army and Marine requirements to Air Force speak and back.

"One part of our job as liaisons between air and ground units is to control LZs (landing zones) and DZs (drop zones) for the ground units in fairly austere locations," said Maj.

Tech. Sgt. Christopher Townsley, loadmaster for the 815th Airlift Squadron tightens chains to secure a High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle onto a C-130J Super Hercules during Voyager Shield. (Staff Sgt. Kristen Pittman)

Andrew Wagner, 621st Mobility Support Operations Squadron AMLO. "And we can't do that without having aircraft, so having the 815th come here helps us with our training."

The exercise also allowed Reservists from the 815th AS, better known as the Flying Jennies, to practice loadmaster-specific training, including personnel drops and rolling cargo training.

The loadmasters loaded two Humvees, provided by the 46th Engineering Battalion, Forward Support Company at JRTC and Fort Polk.

The Jennies then flew to the Geronimo LZ to do austere environment training so they can be ready for deployment and safely complete a quick onload/offload of cargo before the aircraft has to take off again.

Once on the ground at the landing zone, with the C-130J Super Hercules engines still running, the loadmasters directed Humvee drivers Army Specialist Tyler Rempert and Private First Class Jonathan Havens out of the aircraft and then loaded one Humvee back onto the aircraft for a few assault landings.

In all, the 815th AS provided about 60% of the airlift support for the exercise.

"With the 815th AS coming in here, it facilitated all of our LZ and DZ work," said Capt. Drew Sumner, 621st MSOS AMLO. "Without the Hercs, this would have been a much smaller and less impactful exercise."

"For AMLOs, this training is especially useful, because normally I would have to be deployed to get this many repetitions with landings at one time," Wagner said. "Thanks to the aircrews who are so willing to come out here for extended periods of time, it helps us get the extra training we need to prepare for deployment."



Capt. Leesa Froelich, aircraft commander, and Capt. Montgomery Sloat, co-pilot, both of the 815th Airlift Squadron at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, prepare to land at the Joint Readiness Training Center. (Staff Sgt. Kristen Pittman)

During the exercise, the Flying Jennies also had the opportunity to practice engine-running onload and offload of aeromedical evacuation-simulated patients from both a vehicle and a smaller aircraft, in this case a C-208 Caravan.

"Being fairly close, this exercise gave us the opportunity to conduct different

training we normally don't see," Weiher said. "And it was not one where we had to actually deploy the unit to participate. We could fly from home station, get the training and return." #ReserveReady
(Kendziorek is assigned to the 403rd Wing's public affairs office.) ■

Combat Casualties Aren't Always Human

Aeromed Reservists practice caring for Military Working Dogs

Story and photos by Maj. John T. Stamm

The United States military has employed Military Working Dogs since the Revolutionary War; first as pack animals, advancing to pest control, to today where they see action world-wide helping to safeguard military installations and personnel by detecting explosives and drugs.

MWDs have become an integral part of military operations and security, yet many people don't realize dogs are vulnerable

to the same environmental and occupational hazards as humans. They can suffer heat stroke, post-traumatic stress disorder, combat wounds or any number of the same injuries that can produce a human casualty.

"Military Working Dogs are critical assets for military police, special operations units and others operating in today's combat environment," said Capt. Beth Byles, section officer in charge of



Capt. Gabrielle Montone, a veterinary clinic intern at Fort Benning, Georgia, instructs 908th Airlift Wing Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron commander Lt. Col. Amy Sanderson in canine CPR techniques at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Montone and her team conducted canine-specific medical training designed to prepare 908 AES members to provide proper care to Military Working Dogs injured in the line of duty.



Capt. Beth Byles, Fort Benning veterinary clinic officer in charge, provides instruction to Capt. Desiree Statler, 908th Airlift Wing Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron flight nurse, on proper canine casualty techniques.

908 AES officer in charge of mission planning, 1st Lt. Kristian M. Taylor, recognized the gap in training and medical knowledge of MWD care within the unit and set up the training with the subject matter experts.

"As flight nurses, we understand that our patients are not limited to being human and take on the responsibility of having to provide care for a MWD,

perhaps even in the absence of a handler," he said. "We aren't selective in who we treat. Our job is to provide the best care to anyone who needs it, including canines."

908 AES commander Lt. Col. Amy Sanderson re-emphasized the importance of the training, as flight nurses and medical technicians are often the first medical care the animals receive when injured.

"We transport them aboard our aircraft, and they are considered our patients while they are in our system," she said. "It is vital we learn proper care." #ReserveReady

(Stamm is assigned to the 908th Airlift Wing public affairs office.)

the Fort Benning Veterinary Center in Georgia. "Many people don't realize that the (military working) dogs often require medical attention."

Though dogs are similar to humans biologically, they react differently and therefore specialized techniques are needed to provide proper care to the animal and protect the caregiver. That is why it is highly beneficial for military medical personnel to receive canine-specific medical training, and it's why Byles, a team of Fort Benning veterinary interns and 42nd Air Base Wing Security Forces personnel provided MWD evacuation familiarization training to 908th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron personnel at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, recently.

"There are a very limited number of veterinarians in the military, so when MWDs get injured, quite often they are treated by medical personal trained to provide care to humans," Byles said. "Expectations are that injured working dogs will receive the highest level of resuscitative care as far forward as possible, often in the absence of veterinary personnel."

The team taught 908 AES personnel the basics, such as how to check for vital signs and patient assessment. Other topics included emergency airway management, shock management, heat and cold injuries, traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and virtually every other triage technique that medical personnel could employ in a combat environment. Training on artificial canines, personnel also learned how to properly sedate, secure and transport the animals.

Participants learned that it is acceptable and effective to use medications developed for humans on canines. However, transfusing human blood into a canine would prove lethal.

"It would be equivalent to giving 'A-positive' blood to an individual with an 'O-negative' blood type," Byles said.

Senior Airman Daquan Foster (left) and Senior Airman Tyson Eggleston learn the proper techniques to secure an injured canine for transportation.





Capt. Kierstin Flores, 927th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron maintenance operations officer, was previously assigned to active-duty 6th Air Refueling Wing before transferring to the 927th ARW as an Air Reserve Technician.

From Active to Reserve

Trio of MacDill Reservists share their reasons for making the move



Story and Photos by
Staff Sgt. Bradley Tipton

The Air Force Reserve is a combat-ready force that relies heavily on Airmen leaving active duty to fill its ranks. Prior-service Airmen are already trained and bring a tremendous amount of experience to their Reserve positions.

There are countless reasons for Airmen to make the switch from the active-duty Air Force to the Reserve. A trio of Reserve Citizen Airmen assigned to the 927th Air Refueling Wing, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, recently shared their reasons for transitioning into the Reserve.

Capt. Kierstin Flores, an aircraft maintenance operations officer assigned to the 927th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, knew she wanted to be part of the Air Force from a young age.

After graduating high school early, she persuaded her parents to sign a waiver allowing her to enlist at 17 years old. Throughout her career, Flores has worked with numerous units in a variety of positions, experiencing the depth of the Total Force.

“All of my positions were great,” said Flores, reflecting on her experiences. “From pharmacy operations to cargo loading, passenger terminal and ultimately maintenance officer. I even joined the Army National Guard for two years as a transportation officer.”

After an initial eight years on active duty, Flores first entered the Reserve world as an individual mobilization augmentee to accelerate completion of her master’s degree. She went back on active duty for a three-year period at MacDill before landing in her current position as an Air Reserve Technician.

“There are so many challenges on active duty, especially for a single mother, that I decided to go back to the Reserve for the flexibility,” she said. “As an ART, we have very flexible hours. It allows me to spend more time with my child, advance my career and further my education.”

Having been part of the active-duty’s 6th Air Refueling Wing, Flores is

familiar with the active-duty environment and uses her experiences to foster Total Force integration. Considering it to be a priority, she spends as much time as possible mentoring traditional Reservists and teaching them how to operate in a joint environment.

Tech. Sgt. Crystal Cash is a prior-service Airman who feels right at home as a boom operator with the 927th ARW’s 63rd Air Refueling Squadron.

Growing up in Dothan, Alabama, Cash sought to see more of the world than just her small Southern town. Her choice to join the Air Force was also sparked by a desire to grow personally through education. She landed on the boom operator job while looking through the Air Force Specialty Code listings at the Military Enlistment Processing Station.

“When I asked about in-flight refueling, they described it sort of vaguely,” Cash said. “When they said that two planes would meet to refuel

in mid-air, I knew that was my number one choice. It seemed challenging, and it turned into a huge opportunity to experience the full scope of the Air Force.”

During her six years on active duty, Cash honed her skills as a boom operator with the 6th ARW. While on active duty, she achieved the rank of staff sergeant and faced a decision as her commitment neared the end. She had aspirations to quickly finish nursing school, and the active-duty lifestyle with its high operations tempo would mean delaying that. Cash found the answer in the 63rd Air Refueling Squadron.

“There was a definite shift when I joined the Reserve,” she said. “I had a lot more time to focus on my goals outside of the military. I finished my nursing degree and even started piloting civilian aircraft. Being a boom operator allows you to see and experience a lot, but being in control of the aircraft is incredible.”

With four deployments behind her, Cash, now a Reserve Citizen Airman, has promoted to the rank of technical sergeant, become an instructor for other boom operators, and graduated from the University of South Florida with a bachelor of science degree in nursing. Moving from one challenge to the next, Cash now has her sights set on commissioning and becoming a pilot.

Having a father who served in the Air Force made the decision to enlist simple for Tech. Sgt. Devin Hughes, a KC-135 crew chief assigned to the 927th Aircraft

Maintenance Squadron. The plan was to enlist on active duty and transfer to the Reserve once he’d found the right time.

“Overall, I experienced a ton of growth,” Hughes said. “I had a blast at all of my assignments, and met a lot of great people, including my wife who I met in Spokane. Ultimately, the birth of my now two-year-old daughter was the moment I decided to transition off active duty.”

Spending 12 years on active duty, Hughes grew accustomed to life in the uniform.

“For me, it just seemed normal,” he said. “It’s not until I separated that I realized just how much being in the Air Force was part of my identity.”

Hughes spent the majority of his time in maintenance working on the KC-135 Stratotanker at Fairchild AFB, Washington. However, he did have the opportunity to work on the KC-46 Pegasus program in Seattle, and was granted a preference assignment to MacDill, where he finally transitioned to a traditional Reservist role at the 927th AMXS.

“As a traditional Reservist, you have so many benefits, including the chance to serve at the base you choose,” Hughes said. “I’m near where I grew up, get to spend plenty of time with my wife and daughter and work on my career as a real estate agent. It’s fast paced, and you have to be all-in to succeed.”

Serving in a part-time capacity fit into Hughes’ plans, granting him the freedom to pursue a challenging career after active



Tech. Sgt. Devin Hughes, a crew chief assigned to the 927th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, spent 12 years on active duty before making the transition to the Air Force Reserve.

duty while still maintaining connections to the people he’s worked with in the maintenance world.

“I would miss the camaraderie and just doing the job,” he said. “I enjoy drilling and spending time with people who’ve seen and done the same things.”

Airmen who come from active duty have invested countless hours developing their skills and come fully qualified in their AFSC. The Reserve force is able to recruit talent that otherwise may disappear as separating Airmen return to civilian life.

“Active-duty Airmen transitioning to the Air Force Reserve is essential to mission readiness,” said Master Sgt. Shane Hogan, an Air Force Reserve in-service recruiter. “These Airmen are fully trained and mission ready when they arrive. They’re able to provide a wealth of knowledge and train younger Airmen who serve in a part-time basis.”

#ReserveReady #ReserveResilient
(Tipton is assigned to the 927th ARW public affairs office.)



Tech. Sgt. Crystal Cash, 63rd Air Refueling Squadron boom operator, served at the 6th Air Refueling Wing for six years before transitioning to the 927th Air Refueling Wing.

Finding Resilience at 20,000 Feet



Left to right, Lt. Col. Rob Marshall, Lt. Col. Mark Uberuaga and Wes Morgan proudly display the Air Force flag on top of Denali, the highest mountain peak in North America. (Matt Wheat)

Airmen rely on inner strength, each other during difficult Denali climb

By Bo Joyner

Lt. Col. Rob Marshall knew his resilience was going to be tested when he led a group of five current and former Airmen on a quest to scale the highest mountain peak in North America in June, he just didn't think it would be tested quite this much.

"It was a very difficult climb, but unbelievably rewarding," said Marshall, an individual mobilization augmentee assigned to U.S. Space Command who is currently on full-time orders with the Air Reserve Personnel Center at Buckley Air Force, Colorado, about the group's 20,310-foot trek up Denali in Alaska.

"We overcame a lot of obstacles – from extreme weather to unexpected injuries and illnesses to difficult climbing conditions, but we all made it back safely, thanks to the team's resilience and reliance on each other," Marshall said.

In addition to Marshall, the team included active-duty Lt. Col. Mark Uberuaga, traditional Reservist Maj. Marshall

Klitzke and former Airmen Mark Schaffeld and Wesley Morgan.

All experienced mountaineers, the team was hand-picked to focus attention on the importance of resilience.

"We picked Airmen who have overcome significant personal hardships because we want to use their stories to highlight how important it is for people to practice being actively resilient," Marshall, who completed the climb with two torn meniscus in his left knee, said.

The lieutenant colonel said the team's resilience was put to the test at the very onset of the expedition when their flight to the base of Denali was delayed by heavy rain.

"We had been preparing for this for months and we're all chomping at the bit and then we can't even take the air taxi to the glacier because of rain," he said. "A big part of resilience is



Sunrise brings anticipated warmth at the group's 14,000-foot camp for Maj. Marshall Klitzke, left, and Morgan. (Lt. Col. Rob Marshall)

The climbers took the traditional Denali path, called the West Buttress, for the first 7,000 feet of ascending from the airstrip to the 14,000ft camp, but from there they took a more difficult route – called the Upper West Rib – for the final 6,300 feet to the summit.

While the climbers have all scaled mountains the world over, their experience on the Upper West Rib tested their resilience like few other expeditions.

"We took the West Rib because we wanted to push ourselves," Marshall said. "The payoff was some unbelievable views and incredible skiing on a part of the mountain where very few people go. It was great to get away from the crowds, but

the climbing was quite difficult."

This was Uberuaga's sixth expedition on Denali, but the first time he tackled the Upper West Rib. He said the different route was both exhilarating and more challenging.

"Once we left the standard route and pressed out into the unknown on our own, I felt a sense of adventure and excitement I hadn't felt since my first Denali expedition in 1999," he said. "It was much more difficult because we had to break trail in fresh snow, navigate around open and hidden crevasses, assess the risk and need for protection on the steep snow gullies and ice we encountered high on the mountain, as well as continually assess our physical capacity and limits due to the extended time it took to accomplish the route."

From 14,000 feet, the team took half of their gear up to 16,500, dropped it off and skied back down to their high camp. Following two days of poor weather, they made the trek back up to their balcony camp in sub-zero temperatures and prepared for their final push to the summit.

knowing there are some things that are out of your control and sometimes you just have to be patient. That was reinforced for us on day one."

Once the rain cleared and the team made it to the base of Denali, the climbers faced their next big obstacle.

"Most people don't realize it, but one of the greatest dangers at the beginning of a climb is the heat," Marshall said. "It's surprisingly hot and when you're carrying a 60-pound pack and pulling a 70-pound sled, it's easy to get overheated. On the second day of the climb, one of our climbers got pretty sick with an infection, so he dug into his resilience pillars, including turning to his friends to help him. We gave him extra rest and we were able to find some extra medicine from a climber who was leaving the mountain."

Despite the infection and some pretty bad blisters, the team navigated occasional bad weather and made it from the glacier airstrip to the 14,000-foot high camp in eight days.

"For the most part, we had excellent weather, outside of a few storms," Marshall said. "Those storms are representative of daily life. When the weather was good or alright, we would take on risk and push, but we wouldn't push too hard. When the weather got bad, we would use it as an excuse to take a down day and recover. We just rolled with the uncontrollable weather."

Uberuaga climbs the West Rib of Denali at about 16,200 feet. The valley floor is about 8,000 feet below him. (Lt. Col. Rob Marshall)





Uberuaga melts snow at the team's high-camp on the Upper West Rib at about 16,200 feet. There is just enough space for two tents on the ridge. (Lt. Col. Rob Marshall)



Marshall feels alive during the beginning of the team's summit push, several hundred feet above their high camp. (Lt. Col. Rob Marshall)



Left, the Air Force team climbs up the West Rib at about 17,500 feet. (Lt. Col. Rob Marshall) Right, Morgan, Uberuaga and Marshall on the summit of Denali. Marshall is giving the pilot hand signal for "Seven," indicating his successful quest to conquer the famed Seven Summits – the highest point on each continent. (Matt Wheat)



That's when their resilience was put to the ultimate test.

"The weather was perfect and everybody was in high spirits, so we started our final push to the summit at about 9 a.m. on June 11th," Marshall said. "We thought it would take us about 12 hours to reach the summit."

After climbing for 12 hours, the team was still about 500 feet from the summit when they hit a totally unexpected hard blue wall of glacier ice that was very steep. Despite temperatures hovering around minus-20 and the fact that some of the climbers were experiencing frost nip that was approaching frost bite, the climbers took on the challenge of high-stress vertical ice climbing they weren't expecting.

They made it past the ice wall in about four hours, but the 16 hours of extremely difficult mountaineering had taken its toll on the team. Just a few hundred feet from the summit, the climbers decided to set up an emergency camp with the one tent and emergency gear they had packed just in case of unexpected problems.

"While we were putting our emergency camp together, one of our climbers collapsed from cold, exhausting and high-altitude complications," Marshall said. "We're at 19,500 feet, it's 1:30 in the morning and it's extremely cold- I knew the situation had suddenly become life-threatening."

Sunrise as the team ascends an ice and rock section of the West Rib. (Lt. Col. Rob Marshall)



As the rest of the team huddled inside the one three-person tent to warm their extremities and care for the sick climber, Marshall stayed outside to boil snow for water and to radio the park rangers to let them know that one of their climbers was suffering from high-altitude sickness.

"I tapped into the deepest resilience reserve I've ever tapped into," Marshall said. "Although we all had sleeping bags that were rated to minus-20 or minus-40, our friend was in a life-or-death situation. We expanded our circle of people who could help us in an emergency by letting the rangers know we might be needing their help. That's a key part of resilience. Don't wait until a problem has overcome you to reach out for help. It's better to seek help before the problem gets too bad."

With the ill climber struggling to breathe, Marshall initiated a rescue with the park while the other team members gave him food, water and special medicine the carried specifically for this rare illness. They all then hunkered down in the one tent and waited for the relative warmth of morning to come.

"Our sick climber was slowly stabilizing thanks to our medicines," Marshall said. "When I called the park rangers back at about 6:30, they already had a rescue helicopter airborne."

The helicopter arrived and the team placed their fellow climber in a basket and watched as he was flown to safety.

"That was a very emotional moment for all of us," Marshall said. "This was a very experienced climber who had climbed much higher than Denali. He'd never had a problem like this before. No one wakes up thinking 'I'm going to get high altitude illness today' the same way no one thinks they are going to get into a car accident today. Things happen. It's how you react when the unexpected happens that really matters."

With their friend safely off the mountain, the remaining team members rested for a few hours before pushing for the summit. Knowing they had a 10-hour trek back down to their high camp with heavy gear, one of the climbers decided not to attempt to make the summit and instead rested for the hike down. It was a selfless act that ensured the safety of the whole team.

The rest of the team climbed to the summit where they cried, hugged, laughed, yelled and marveled at a view that few people ever get to see. Then, they did some push-ups.

"We did 20 push-ups at 20,000 feet in honor of our two climbers who didn't make it and in honor of all our Airmen who have died since 9-11," Marshall said. "It was sunny and there was no wind. It was the perfect weather to be on the summit."

The team made the 10-hour trek back to 14,000 feet and after some rest, headed back to the base of the mountain.

After reuniting with the evacuated climber, they had a chance to reflect on what the climb taught them about resilience.

"This climb took a lot of grit," Uberuaga said. "Almost every aspect of the climb was extremely demanding, both physically and mentally. After a spinal infection destroyed my back in 2020, I set this as an ambitious recovery goal. I wasn't certain I would be able to carry the heavy loads on the lower mountain, function at all from sleeping on the ground in a small tent, or perform well up high after my back reconstruction just six months prior. The relief I felt after successfully completing each stage was powerful. After all I went through last year, I feel empowered to overcome almost anything."

"There's a reason why people from all walks of life use mountains as an illustration for so many of life's events and emotions," Klitzke said. "Mountains, and mountain climbing, are a microcosmic physical reflection of life's trials and joys. Similar to life, on the mountain you experience moments of pain, regret, anger, joy, excitement, peace, etc... But these moments come and go, they are not lasting. Every climb provides me a well of lessons, experiences and confidence that I can draw upon to take on future challenges, persevere through hardships and rebound from setbacks."

"For me, this climb reinforced how important it is to stay positive," Marshall said. "When the going got tough, whether it was storms, injuries, illness or really challenging climbing, everybody stayed positive. If anybody on our team would have gotten a bad attitude or checked out, it could have put everybody's life in danger."

"It was also amazing to see how we all relied on each other. Everybody had good days and bad days on the climb. Just like

A panoramic photo shows Marshall from high on the West Rib, approximately 1,000 feet below the summit. (Wesley Morgan)



in life, some days you are the person who needs help and sometimes you are the person who does the helping. For me, I fared better on the climb up, but I had terrible foot cramps on the climb down. That's when I had to rely on my team to take care of me."

Klitzke echoed Marshall's sentiments. "The totality of everything – the climbing objectives, weather, snow conditions, group dynamics, physical adversities – made this the most difficult expedition I have been a part of," he said. "To each man on the team's credit, everyone adapted to the challenges well, helped each other, picked up the downed man and stayed positive. The mutual support within the team was the epitome of what you would expect from a bunch of Air Force dudes."

Uberuaga said he hopes his group's Denali trip helps inspire other Airmen to get in touch with nature and work on building up their own resilience.

"High altitude mountaineering isn't for everyone," he said. "But the benefits of being outdoors with friends collectively tackling significant challenges is really good for everyone's resiliency. I encourage all Airmen to dream of an adventure, talk some friends into joining you, plan and prepare, and then go out and do it. The confidence and camaraderie gained will be invaluable for tackling day-to-day challenges of your life."

"Active resilience is the regular intentional practice of getting into difficult scenarios that test your four pillars of resiliency," Marshall said. "Like going to the gym to lift weights, we've got to exercise our resiliency so we're ready to use it when life throws unexpected challenges at us. For us, mountaineering and outdoor recreation is a favorite tool. For others, there are countless alternatives. The trick is to find what makes you feel alive and figure out the ways it makes you more resilient. Then do it often!" #ReserveResilient ■



Career field managers adopt myVector

Earlier this year, the Air Force introduced myVector, a virtual platform empowering Airmen to communicate their career goals more effectively with senior leaders within their career field.

"One of our core missions to develop current and future leaders within the Reserve force requires innovative approaches to spread the knowledge from the highest levels of Air Force Reserve leadership down to the individual Reservists as efficiently as possible," said Maj. Chanell Hunter, Headquarters Air Reserve Personnel Center assignment facilitator. "MyVector gets us one step closer to realizing that goal by providing a more effective dissemination tool."

To accommodate all Reservists, myVector now has professional development questions tailored to specific grades and Air Force Specialty Codes, an upgrade from the previous system that did not allow this level of customization.

"Officer and enlisted development plans were static in nature due to the inability to customize what information career field managers wanted to know about its particular member," Hunter said. "This will give the senior leaders involved in the development team meetings more specific information when tailoring detailed vectors back to members and their leadership."

Additionally, myVector offers real-time records management functionality by granting access to vectors from past DTs, access to Personnel Records Display Application records and

detailed information on each Airman's career, allowing managers to see an Airman's complete career history.

"As a career field manager, my goal is to get the right person in the right place at the right time," said Col. Trina Hood, Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command logistic career field manager. "The flexibility of myVector allows us to target specific audiences enabling robust deliberate career development and options for Airmen who choose to chart their own career path."

Members using myVector also have the ability to share more information with their mentors and career field managers than any platform has allowed up to this point.

"MyVector is a simpler system for Airmen to use because it connects various platforms into one centralized location," said Hunter. "Airmen can use myVector to facilitate mentor relationships, update their development applications and access their personnel records."

"The new system is quite intuitive and easy to navigate, which allows board members to quickly score records and place more focus on personalized vectors for our Airmen," echoed Hood.

Reservists will be able to access myVector for a certain window of time leading up to the development team, typically 120 days. Airmen will be notified by their career field managers via a myPers message when they are able to update their information prior to the convening of the board. #ReserveReady ■

Unit Reserve Coordinators

The link between IMAs and their units



By Tech. Sgt. Tara R. Abrahams

Individual Mobilization Augmentees are Reservists assigned to active-component units. From arrival to departure, and everything in between, the Unit Reserve Coordinator is the link for the IMA between his or her assigned unit and the Air Force Reserve.

URCs are active-duty military or civilians who are appointed by the active-duty commander. They act as the liaison between the IMA and the unit, and usually perform this function as an additional duty. They are ultimately there to make it easier to serve.

While operational control of the IMAs lies fully with the active component unit to which they're assigned, administrative control is shared between the unit and the Headquarters Readiness and Integration Organization. The URC acts as the focal point for a number of unit concerns and the IR's concerns and responsibilities. They manage the Reservist's participation, assist with maintaining readiness, and ensure all personnel actions, such as promotions or skill-level upgrades, are completed and up-to-date. All of these duties help the IMA be ready at any given time during the year.

"[URCs] need to be cognizant that the IMA's main responsibility is to maintain readiness and training to support their active-duty unit in the event they have to backfill the active-duty billet or position they're fulfilling," said Rick Bacon, a long-time URC and National Security Emergency Preparedness regional director with First Air Force - Air Force Northern, Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida. As a URC, Bacon oversees more than 100 IMAs who serve as Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers around the country.

Because many IMAs don't necessarily perform their military duties on a daily, or even monthly, basis, the URC is responsible for staying connected with the member throughout the year.

Bacon said he has contact with his unit's IMAs monthly at the very least, but often weekly. This allows him to set expectations and ensure all of their military concerns are being handled.



Staff Sgt. Dylan Snapp, Unit Reserve Coordinator for Headquarters U.S. European Command, meets with Chief Master Sgt. Derrick Strohman, superintendent of HQ RIO Detachment 8 at U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart, Germany. URCs are active-duty military or civilians appointed by the active-duty commander who serve as the link for the IMA between his or her assigned unit and the Air Force Reserve. (Army photo by Rey Ramon)

Staff Sgt. Dylan K. Snapp, URC and Joint Reserve Program Manager with Headquarters U.S. European Command, talked about how he ensures the IMAs are updated while they are not actively participating.

"I keep strong lines of communication with the IMAs and their assigned divisions," said Snapp. "I aim to provide them with the knowledge and resources that keep them up-to-date on Air Force topics and policies."

Those topics range from individual requirements, unit missions or activities, and Air Force-wide changes, such as the recent change to Air Force fitness testing.

"I am so grateful for the hard work of all our URCs at the active component units where our IMAs are assigned," said Chief Master Sgt. Stacy Wilfong, HQ RIO command chief. "It's vital that our IMAs have someone in their assigned unit who is up-to-speed on all things related to individual Reservists. Their work is integral in not only making it easy for our IMAs to serve, but to ensure their work for their unit is meaningful."

All in all, the communication and dynamic relationship between the IMA and the URC is essential to the IR's military service and support to the Air Force.

"In my personal opinion, the Air Force would not be able to operate if it wasn't for the support of the Reserve and Air National Guard having that reserve force that is ready to respond at a moment's notice," Bacon said.

He said the URC's relationship with their Reservists "ensures they have all the tools to make them successful in order to respond to the fight." #ReserveReady (Abrahams is assigned to the HQ RIO public affairs office.) ■

AFIPPS: New pay-affecting system to deploy soon

Reservists must claim their account by the end of 2021

There's a new pay-affecting system being rolled out to the Total Force over the next 12 months, and officials want Reserve Citizen Airmen to be prepared for a seamless transition.

In order to avoid any pay and leave delays, Reservists will need to claim their Air Force Integrated Personnel and Pay System (AFIPPS) account before Dec. 31 of this year. Here's what Reserve Citizen Airmen need to know about AFIPPS and what they need to do to claim their account:

What's AFIPPS?

AFIPPS is the modern solution to consolidate military pay and human resource processes into one digital platform. AFIPPS will expand the already-existing Military Personnel Data System (MilPDS) by incorporating military pay responsibilities and processed to create a true human resource ecosystem.

What's in it for me?

AFIPPS will finally provide one, single authoritative record for Airmen and Guardians, ensuring more accurate and timely pay and human resource processes like leave and housing allowance for the Total Force, making everyone's life a little easier.

Why do we need AFIPPS?

Today, the Air Force is faced with resolving between 50,000 and 60,000

pay problems every year, which leads to inaccurate or late pay, complex resolution processes for Airmen and Guardians, and tedious workarounds for personnel and pay professionals.

The Air Force's number one priority is its people, and when pay issues draw focus from the mission at hand, that's a problem that needs to be resolved. This new pay system is the solution. AFIPPS will reduce pay errors that currently result in unnecessary stress and wasted time.

How will it be implemented and what do I need to do?

AFIPPS will be rolled out in two phases. Phase one, AFIPPS Read-Only Self-Service, has already begun. At this time, current MilPDS users can access and claim their user accounts and are encouraged to do so as soon as possible.

In January of this year, current military users received an additional role (U.S. Air Force Employee Self-Service) that takes user to their new AFIPPS responsibility in MilPDS. This new responsibility can be found by logging into your current MilPDS account, going to the navigator window and scrolling down until you see your new AFIPPS responsibility.

Upon clicking this responsibility, individuals will be able to access AFIPPS, review and validate their personal record. For the remainder of users, account creation notices will be released in waves to the Total Force.

If there are any errors in a member's personal records, users can troubleshoot these issues using their current processes.

For complete guidance on correcting member records, review the AFIPPS Account Claim User Guide, available on the AFIPPS website, and the AFIPPS Account Creation Process video, available on MilSuite. Links are provided on the facing page.

Phase two, AFIPPS Full Capability, slated for release in 2022, will combine military personnel and pay within the same ecosystem, integrating LeaveWeb and MilPDS with AFIPPS capabilities. More details on this will be coming over the next several months.

Please note that login instructions will be sent in waves over the course of several months, so don't worry if you don't immediately receive login instructions. However, if you have not received your account creation notice by Dec. 1 of this year, contact a1dta.afipps.ocm@us.af.mil to report this.

Still have questions?

Reserve Citizen Airmen with questions can e-mail the Air Force's AFIPPS office or visit the website, www.afpc.mil/support/afipps for more information and helpful resources related to AFIPPS, including more videos and training details. *#ReserveReady* *#ReserveReform*



AFIPPS

AIR FORCE INTEGRATED PERSONNEL AND PAY SYSTEM

Phase 1 Available 2021

READ-ONLY SELF-SERVICE

Step 1: Claim Your AFIPPS Account
Access your read-only account and verify your personal information is correct. If you identify a problem, report it to your servicing personnel agency to resolve the issue.

Step 2: Update Your Information
As you encounter career and life changes throughout 2021, return to AFIPPS to ensure your information is up to date.

It is extremely important that you:

- Review your information and make any corrections now
- Return throughout 2021 to ensure your information is up to date

CLAIM YOUR ACCOUNT

UPDATE INFORMATION

Phase 2 to Follow

PAYROLL DELIVERY

- INITIATE PAY PROCESSES**
- PERFORM LEAVE ACTIONS**
- MANAGE HR APPROVALS**

ACCOUNT CREATION

It is extremely important that you review your information and make any corrections now. Return throughout 2021 to ensure your information is up to date.

- 1 Claim your account using the link sent to you
- 2 Verify your record and correct any errors
- 3 Keep your account up-to-date

Start using your account!

<https://www.afpc.af.mil/support/AFIPPS>
a1dta.afipps.ocm@us.af.mil
<https://www.milsuite.mil/video/watch/video/43507>

Are YOU Up-To-Date on AFIPPS?

You Should Be!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



a1dta.afipps.ocm@us.af.mil



milsuite.mil/video/watch/43507



www.afpc.mil/support/afipps



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AFIPPS

A graphic element of the AFIPPS logo, featuring a stylized blue aircraft in flight above a blue silhouette of a person.

AIR FORCE INTEGRATED PERSONNEL AND PAY SYSTEM